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SCRIPTURAL PREDESTINATION NOT FATALISM.

TWO CONVERSATIONS

ON

ROMANS VIII. 29, 30, AND EPHESIANS I. 5.

DESIGNED TO SHOW,

FOR THE SPECIAL ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUNG CHRISTIANS,
THAT THE PREDESTINATION OF THE BIBLE REFERS,
CHIEFLY AND PRIMARILY,
TO THE RESTORATION AND PERFECTION OF THE
PHYSICAL NATURE OF THE SAINTS
AT THE LAST DAY.

BY HENRY BLEBY.

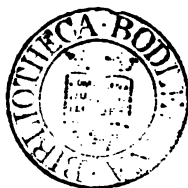
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SCRIPTURAL PREDESTINATION,

&c.

CONVERSATION I.

“FIRST, therefore, let this be before your eyes, that to covet any other knowledge of predestination than that which is set forth by the word of God, is a point of no less madness than if a man have a will to go by an impassable way, or to see in darkness.”—CALVIN.

“The scripture is the school of the Holy Ghost, in which, as nothing is left out which is both necessary and profitable to be known, so nothing is taught but that which is behoveful to learn. Whatsoever therefore is uttered in the scripture concerning predestination, we must beware that we debar not the faithful from it, lest we should seem enviously to defraud them of the benefit of their God, or to blame and accuse the Holy Ghost who hath published those things which it is in any way profitable to be suppressed.”—CALVIN.

MISS H.—I appreciate the favour you have conferred, in so promptly acceding to my wish for an interview. I was induced to make the request, being assured by our mutual friend, Mrs. K., that you would not be unwilling to visit us in our bereavement and sorrow. But I particularly wished you to call, as I was anxious to consult you on a subject which has caused me no small degree of painful solicitude.

MINISTER.—It will afford me pleasure if, by any counsel or service it is in my power to render, I can relieve the anxiety to which you refer. Allow me, then, to ask, What is the cause of your disquietude?

MISS H.—For some time a young friend and myself have attended a weekly Bible-class, where the Rev. T. Scott's "Commentary" has been used to explain the scriptures. What I have heard there, relating to predestination, has dwelt much in my thoughts; and, because of the painful exercises of mind to which this subject has given rise, I felt desirous of having some conversation with you concerning it.

M.—It is a subject which has occasioned a vast amount of controversy, into which I am by no means desirous to enter. But if, by any explanations I am able to give, I can remove a difficulty out of your way, and assist you in arriving at a right understanding of the truth of God, I shall gladly employ a little time in conversation with you for that purpose. State the particular point on which you require information.

MISS H.—Will you favour me with your thoughts on that passage in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which speaks of predestination?

M.—Be so good as read at length the passage to which you refer.

MISS H.—"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he

also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. viii. 29, 30.)

M.—You find difficulty in understanding this passage ?

MISS H.—I do. During the time I have attended your ministry, I have heard you clearly and strongly preach the doctrine of Universal Redemption ; but not more clearly and strongly than it appears to me to be set forth in the holy scriptures, in those texts which affirm that Christ "died for all ;" that "he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world ;" and many others equally explicit. Yet this passage speaks in such terms of the predestination of some, that I am unable to reconcile it with universal redemption ; and it greatly perplexes me. Then the thought is continually presenting itself that, if I am one of those who are predestinated to salvation, I shall certainly be saved ; and if I am not so predestinated, I shall infallibly be lost. Now I am most anxious to know whether I am predestinated to eternal life, or not.

M.—I am not surprised that the passage should present difficulties to your mind. Many persons, who have devoted their attention to the investigation of revealed truth a much longer time than you, have been equally embarrassed by this portion of scripture. But I am persuaded that much of the difficulty connected with it arises from a misapprehension of its meaning ; and that it admits of an explication which is at once simple and satisfactory.

MISS H.—I am delighted to hear you say so, and wait with anxiety to know your views of it.

M.—You have yourself suggested one very

weighty reason why the construction ordinarily put upon these words cannot be the true one,—that it involves a contradiction of other parts of the word of God, the import of which is sufficiently plain and unmistakable. The absolute and unconditional predestination of some men to salvation, and of others to perdition, cannot be reconciled, by any argument that has ever been advanced upon the subject, with the doctrine of universal redemption,—a glorious truth which shines through all the sacred scriptures with the brightness and clearness of a sunbeam.

MISS H.—That is precisely the difficulty which I feel.

M.—Some other explanation of the passage must therefore be sought. The word of God is always consistent with itself, and there is a beautiful and perfect harmony running through the entire volume, which becomes the more apparent as its exhaustless treasures of heavenly wisdom are more fully unfolded by the researches and investigations of good and learned men. We ought never to put such a construction on any detached portion of the scriptures, as would place it at variance with other portions, or with the general teaching of inspired truth : for God cannot deny or contradict himself. By disregarding this essential rule of interpretation, and by taking passages apart from their context, and in this isolated form putting our own construction upon them, we may be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” By such a mode of interpretation, the sacred oracles may be made to speak any thing that will suit the views, or fancies, or pre-

judices of men, however absurd and extravagant, and however inconsistent with the character and perfections of their Divine Author. It is thus that numerous errors and heresies have been engendered in the Christian church, and doctrines have been promulgated, as doctrines of the Bible, wholly irreconcilable with the well-known attributes of that holy Being, who is loving to every man, and whose "tender mercies are over all his works."

MISS H.—I fully concur in the justness and propriety of your remarks. The subject never occurred to me in the light in which you have put it; but I see how important is the principle of scripture interpretation which you have laid down. Do you think, then, that, with regard to this passage concerning predestination, a disregard of this principle has given rise to misapprehension of its meaning?

M.—Assuredly I do. It is a passage which, when viewed apart from its context, and from holy scripture generally, is capable of great misconstruction, and has often been made to bear a meaning which its Divine Author never intended it to convey. For the sake of clearness and order, I would remark that the subject of the text we have now under consideration is Jehovah's decree of predestination; and there are three points raised, which are all of sufficient importance to entitle them to a separate consideration.

MISS H.—Will you be kind enough to name them?

M.—You will observe that the passage speaks of those to whom this decree of predestination has reference, as those "whom he foreknew:" it also mentions the great and glorious destiny to which

it appoints them,—they are predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren:” and then it describes the process of moral renovation by which they are fitted for the honour and happiness to which they are predestined.

MISS H.—As first in the order you have named, be kind enough to point out who are the parties included in this decree of predestination.

M.—Refer to the passage, and you read, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate,” &c. In the former part of the chapter the apostle describes the character, experience, and conduct of Christian believers; and the text has reference to those who answer to this description. Those whom God foreknew as believers in Christ, embracing and obeying the gospel—those who are foreknown to him as “the saints” spoken of in a preceding verse—as loving God and “the called according to his purpose,”—are the persons to whom Jehovah’s decree of predestination refers: and all such, in every age and nation, are foreknown to God.

MISS H.—The foreknowledge of God has always appeared to me a mysterious and perplexing subject.

M.—It is by no means surprising that you find, in connexion with the foreknowledge of God, that which exceeds your comprehension. It would be more wonderful if it were otherwise: for what finite mind can comprehend the Infinite? Foreknowledge is an attribute, so to speak, of the Divine Omniscience; and the omniscience of God is one of those glorious and illimitable perfections of the Divine Nature which necessarily transcend

all our thoughts. St. Paul felt this when he said, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" We can no more grasp the idea of his omniscience, than of the eternity, the omnipresence, or the omnipotence of the Deity: the mind is bewildered, and lost in the attempt. Connected with such a subject, therefore, which, in its own nature, is mysterious and incomprehensible, we must expect to find that which perplexes us, and eludes all our investigations. The omniscience of God embraces all that is past, present, or to come. Nothing can be unknown to Him. From eternity to eternity all things are open to his sight. An eminent divine of the last century says, in one of his sermons:—"All time, or rather all eternity, (for time is only that small fragment of eternity which is allotted to the children of men,) being present to him at once, he does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another, but sees all things in one point of view, from everlasting to everlasting. As all time, with every thing that exists therein, is present to him at once, so he sees whatever was, is, or will be, to the end of time."

All Christian believers, therefore, must be foreknown by Him. From before the foundation of the world, he perfectly understood all that would transpire in the history of man. He foreknew all that would believe the gospel, and be saved; and all that would be disobedient to the gospel, persevere in sin, and be finally condemned.

Miss H.—The difficulty which presses on my mind is this, that as God foreknows all who will

be saved, and all who will be finally lost ; therefore, they must be saved or lost as he foreknows, and it cannot be otherwise.

M.—I concur in the view you express concerning the Divine prescience ; but demur to the conclusion you draw from it. The foreknowledge of God, considered in itself, does not influence the salvation of the believer, or the destruction of the sinner ; it does not cause the faith of the one, or the unbelief of the other, “for this plain reason,—that it is simply knowledge, and not influence.” The Divine prescience is perfectly consistent with, and does not affect, the moral agency of man. It would be precisely the same in every case as it is now, if it were possible (which it is not) that God neither did nor could foresee the issue of man’s probation : This man, in the exercise of the self-determining power with which he is endowed as a moral agent, would continue impenitent and unbelieving, and urge on his way to ruin ; and that individual would listen to the gospel, repent, believe, and be saved, exactly the same as they severally do now when God foresees how these things will be.

To that omniscience, which has been perfectly acquainted from eternity with the true nature and origin, and the remotest tendencies and issues, of all events, all men must be perfectly foreknown, with all the circumstances connected with their entire history. Consequently, God foreknows all those who will be finally saved, and comprehended in his family ; not because he has decreed and necessitated every thing that comes to pass in such a way that it cannot be otherwise, but because, omniscience being one of his essential

attributes, nothing in the past, present, or future can be concealed from his knowledge. The mere foreknowledge of any event does not render it necessary, nor does it at all necessarily influence the matter. There are circumstances of which we have a foreknowledge : for instance, an eclipse of the sun or moon is calculated and foretold with the utmost exactitude ; and events, which partake more of the character of contingencies, are often foreknown to men : yet it is never supposed that this kind of foreknowledge exerts any influence on these events, much less that it causes them. On the contrary, we are conscious that it is a mere accident, and that they would transpire precisely as they do if we had no previous knowledge of their occurrence.

Miss H.—The foreknowledge of God must, of course, comprehend all contingencies, however they may arise.

M.—Certainly ; and, amongst these, all the sins that are committed by men. But how derogatory to the character of that all-perfect Being would it be, to assume that his foreknowledge causes these sins to be committed, or that God foreknows them only because he has fore-ordained and decreed that it shall be so, and therefore it cannot be otherwise ! Would not this be, in fact, representing him, who is a pure flame of holiness, as the author of sin ? That he foresees whatever comes to pass, is true. He foreknows how, at any given time, an individual will, of his own free-will and choice, be guilty of some specific violation of his own law : and he distinctly foresees all the circumstances and temptations, and all the motives and operations of the mind, that will lead to such an issue. But his

prescience of the matter does not, either directly or indirectly, cause, or in any way affect, the event. He necessarily knows it because his omniscience comprehends all things ; but we can easily conceive how all would transpire in precisely the same manner if he did not thus see the end from the beginning.

Some pertinent remarks on this subject occur in the works of a highly-gifted modern theologian, who says, "Simple knowledge is in no sense a cause of action. Nor can it be conceived to be causal, unconnected with exerted power ; for mere knowledge, therefore, an action remains free or necessitated, as the case may be. A necessitated action is not made a voluntary one by its being foreknown ; a free action is not made a necessary one. Free actions foreknown will not therefore cease to be contingent. But how stands the case as to their certainty ? Precisely on the same ground. The certainty of a necessary action foreknown, does not result from the knowledge of the action, but from the operation of the necessitating cause ; and, in like manner, the certainty of a free action does not result from the knowledge of it, which is no cause at all, but from the voluntary cause, that is, the determination of the will. It alters not the case in the least to say, that the voluntary action might have been otherwise : had it been otherwise, the knowledge of it would have been otherwise. But as the will which gives birth to the action is not dependent upon the previous knowledge of God, but the knowledge of the action upon foresight of the choice of the will, neither the will nor the act is controlled by the knowledge ; and the action,

though foreseen, is still free or contingent. The foreknowledge of God has, then, no influence upon either the freedom or the certainty of actions, for this plain reason,—that it is knowledge, and not influence; and actions may be certainly foreknown without their being rendered necessary by that foreknowledge. But here it is said, ‘If the result of an absolute contingency be certainly foreknown, it can have no other result, it *cannot* happen otherwise.’ This is not the true inference: it *will* not happen otherwise; but I ask ‘Why *can* it not happen otherwise?’ ‘Can’ is an expression of potentiality, it denotes power or possibility. The objection is, that it is not possible that the action should otherwise happen. But why not? What deprives it of that power? If a necessary action were in question, it could not otherwise happen than as the necessitating cause shall compel; but then that would arise from the necessitating cause solely, and not from the prescience of the action, which is not causal. But if the action be free, and it enter into the very nature of a voluntary action to be unconstrained, then it might have happened in a thousand other ways, or not have happened at all; the foreknowledge of it no more affects its nature in this case than in the other. All its potentiality, so to speak, still remains, independent of foreknowledge, which neither adds to its power of happening otherwise, nor diminishes it. But then we are told that ‘the prescience of it, in that case, must be uncertain.’ Not unless any person can prove that the Divine prescience is unable to dart through all the workings of the human mind, all its comparison of things in the judgment, all the

influences of motives on the affections, all the hesitations and haltings of the will to its final choice. 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for us;' but it is the knowledge of Him 'who understandeth the thoughts afar off.'"

Miss H.—I see the bearing of this reasoning upon the subject of our conversation.

M.—Yes, it applies to the issue of every man's probation in this world. He "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid," foresaw, from the beginning of the world, who, among all the posterity of Adam, would, as moral agents, of their own free choice, reject his proffered mercy, neglect their salvation, and persevere in sin until they were irretrievably undone. On the other hand, he foreknew all those who, in the exercise of that same power of self-determination which belonged to them, would attend to the call of mercy, turn to God by penitent faith, become partakers of the great salvation, and persevere in evangelical obedience unto eternal life. And all those whom he thus foreknew as saints, availing themselves of the means and opportunities of salvation with which they are severally favoured, he hath included in the great, irreversible decree of predestination to which reference is made in the verse under our consideration.

Miss H.—I sincerely thank you. Your remarks have relieved my mind from some of the perplexity in which it was involved concerning this mysterious question of the Divine foreknowledge. Although there is much connected with it, which, from the nature of the subject, I cannot comprehend; yet I receive the important distinction you have pointed

out between foreknowledge and influence, and its bearing upon this passage: and I now observe, what did not strike my attention before, that those who are spoken of are not said to be foreknown because they are predestinated, but "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." If they are foreknown as believers and saints, which you have convinced me is the case, allow me to inquire, What is that, then, to which they are predestinated?

M.—That will now form the second topic of our conversation concerning Jehovah's decree of predestination: "The glorious and exalted destiny to which it appoints them." I wish you to take particular notice of the apostle's words, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Our attention is here carried forward beyond the bounds of time; the veil which separates us from eternity is drawn aside, and we are shown what the saints will be hereafter, when all the mighty and glorious purposes of God's love towards the human family shall be fulfilled, the great work of human redemption be in the highest sense perfected, and "death swallowed up in victory."

Miss H.—That is to me, certainly, altogether a new idea. It is, however, a very interesting view of the subject; and I shall be glad to hear your sentiments unfolded at greater length.

M.—I am perfectly satisfied that the decree of predestination, which the apostle Paul here describes, does not refer to what the Christian believer becomes in this world through the renewing and

transforming power of the grace of God ; but to what he is to be when time shall be no more, and his salvation is for ever perfected by the final reunion of the glorified spirit with the immortal and glorified body. It is on the ground, so to speak, of what God foreknew the saint would be in the present life,—because he foresaw that he would avail himself of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, be saved from his sins, and obey the Gospel,—that he made this decree concerning him, and appointed him to such a glorious destiny, “predestinating him to be conformed to the image of his Son,”—the image of the glorified humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All “whom he did foreknow”—all who make their calling and election sure, washing white their robes in the blood of the Lamb—are predestined to experience the resurrection-power of the Son of God, and to be restored from the dust of death to a glorious immortality. For it is decreed by Him—who wills with infinite ease and infinite energy, and whose will none can effectually oppose or control—that all his saints shall, at the last day, be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, the God-man, their bodies be raised from the grave, and “fashioned like unto his glorious body,” that he may be the “first-born among many brethren.”

The resurrection of the believer’s body—his perfect and final deliverance from the remotest effects of the fall—is the subject on which the apostle has particularly treated in the foregoing verses. You will observe that, in the preceding chapter, (the 7th,) he graphically describes the struggles of the awakened sinner, feeling most painfully the

bondage and misery of sin ; and in the last verse represents him as entering into a state of liberty and salvation "through Christ Jesus our Lord." He then proceeds in this, the eighth chapter, to describe, with the same graphic effect, the new state and character, and the exalted privileges, of the sinner thus saved "through Christ Jesus." In the first nine verses he shows, that those who are "in Christ"—those who believe in him, for that is the simple meaning of the phrase—are already saved from the guilt and power of sin ; or, in other words, are justified and regenerated by the Spirit of God that dwelleth in them. He then goes on to show, how all the effects of sin upon the physical part of their nature shall also be done away for ever, and their salvation perfected by the resurrection of their bodies from a state of death, and by their glorification together with the Lord Jesus Christ. Read from the ninth verse to the thirtieth, carefully marking where the inspired writer uses his oft-repeated parenthesis, and you will find that, throughout this long passage, "the glory which shall be revealed in us" at the resurrection-day, or, as the apostle otherwise expresses it, "at the manifestation of the sons of God,"—"the deliverance of the creature from the bondage of corruption" (the dominion of death) "into the glorious liberty of the sons of God,"—"the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,"—is the precise point which the apostle has in view, the glorious subject which inspires and employs his pen. And this is what is specially adverted to as the high and happy destiny of true believers, where the apostle says, "Whom he did foreknow,

he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."

MISS H.—I have always regarded this chapter as one of exceeding beauty and comprehensiveness; but your remarks upon it have shown me that there is a connexion between its several parts which invests it with additional interest and value. The latter part of the chapter appears also to be closely connected with what has gone before it.

M.—Precisely so. If you examine it carefully at your leisure, you will find that the remaining verses, from the thirtieth to the end of the chapter, contain a series of deductions, or conclusions, which the apostle triumphantly draws from the premises he has previously laid down: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any

other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Miss H.—I shall certainly take an early opportunity of following out the train of thought you have suggested. But, to return to the more immediate subject of discussion: I understood you to say, that Jehovah's decree of predestination is, that his saints shall be conformed to the image of our risen and glorified Saviour.

M.—That is the view I wished to convey; and this decree is contained and clearly set forth in many passages of scripture, to animate the faith and hope and exertions of the faithful people of God: in which respect, you will perceive, it differs very essentially from those fabulous decrees by which it is pretended that a portion of the human race are absolutely and unconditionally predestinated to salvation and eternal life, and the remainder are reprobated, or passed by, and left to perish without help and without hope. These supposititious decrees—for their existence has only been assumed, not proved—are, confessedly, secret and mysterious; and it is admitted, by many of their supporters, that they have no place in the sacred volume. But it is not so with that decree of predestination referred to in this passage: it is clearly and plainly declared in various parts of the word of God, so that all may read it there.

Miss H.—Will you be kind enough to refer me to some of these passages?

M.—Turn to 1 Cor. xv., which, because of its relation to the resurrection of the saints, is usually read as part of the funeral service of the Church. Read from verse forty-five to fifty-four.

MISS H.—“It is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy : the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy : and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery ; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

M.—You will observe, it is said, with special reference to our physical restoration at the last day, that, “*as we have borne the image of the earthy*” Adam, “*we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*” Adam,—language which bears a striking similarity to the words of the apostle to the Romans, “Whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be *conformed to the image* of his Son.” Please to turn also to Phil. iii., and read the last two verses.

MISS H.—“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

M.—Here, also, the peculiar form of expression is remarkable, “*change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.*” You will remember, also, where St. John says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, *when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” (1 John iii. 2.) Again, it is said, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*” (Col. iii. 4.) “He shall come to be *glorified in his saints*, and to be *admired in all them that believe.*” (2 Thess. i. 10.) “This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and *I will raise him up at the last day.*” (John vi. 40.) All these passages embody Jehovah’s decree of predestination concerning the saints, and, clearly revealing their future glory and happiness, show the exalted destiny reserved for them by their Father and their God.

MISS H.—I never before observed how similar the phraseology is, in the passages you have pointed out to me, to the language used by Paul in speaking of those who are foreknown as being “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Viewed in the light which these scriptures cast upon it, the predestination of believers cer-

tainly appears to me altogether a different matter from what it did before ; nor was my mind ever so impressed as now with the vast importance of interpreting the word of God by the light which it sheds upon itself.

M.—You will find that the Old Testament, as well as the New, throws light upon this subject. This decree of predestination was not altogether unknown to the Old-Testament saints. “Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel,”—brought forth from comparative obscurity. The lofty privileges and glorious prospects of the people of God are fully developed under that better and more perfect dispensation of religion with which we are favoured ; but, in former ages, the true servants of the most high God were not left in total ignorance concerning these things. Amid the comparative darkness of their imperfect and inferior dispensations, the veil was partially lifted, and some occasional glimpses were permitted to them of the glory which is to be revealed in the saints at the manifestation of the sons of God. You will find a remarkable passage in Job: “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me.” (Job xix. 25—27.) Daniel also says, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that

turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Dan. xii. 2, 3.) And the Head of the church, speaking through Isaiah, gives this promise to his church: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isai. xxvi. 19.)

MISS H.—The predestination of those whom God foreknew, to be conformed to the image of his Son, signifies, then, that they are to be raised up at the last day with bodies resembling the resurrection-body of the Lord Jesus Christ. This I understand to be your meaning?

M.—Exactly so. As the apostle Paul put it, who must be regarded as unexceptionable authority, "Having borne the image of the earthy," (Adam,) "they shall"—they are destined beforehand to—"bear the image of the heavenly" (Adam)—the likeness of his glorified humanity. Their bodies are to be "fashioned like unto his glorious body;" they are to "be like him." What this implies, we cannot tell. In this life it does not fully appear what we shall be hereafter. Vast as the capacities of man's immortal mind are admitted to be, and capable of developement to an unlimited extent, this is a subject which transcends its comprehension. In our present state of being, we are incapable of forming an adequate conception of "the glory which shall be revealed in us;" for we have neither historical facts, nor images in nature, to assist our ideas upon the subject. It will be only truly known when it is realised. But this we do know, that "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

MISS H.—Will you be kind enough to mention the specific qualities in respect to which the restored bodies of the saints will be “conformed to the image of the Son,” so as to be “like him?”

M.—The body of Christ, which has been raised from the grave and taken up to heaven, is designated “*a glorious body* ;” for you will remember that, in one of the passages already referred to, the apostle says, “Our vile body” shall be “fashioned like unto his glorious body.” In another place St. Paul says, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.” (Heb. ii. 9.) The glorified body of Christ seems, from those views of it which were permitted to Saul on his way to Damascus, and to John in the isle of Patmos, to present the same bright and glorious appearance in heaven that distinguished it on the mount of transfiguration. The three apostles, who accompanied him on that memorable occasion, were favoured with a transitory view of the glory which the Father hath given to him as the God-man,—“the glory which shall be revealed in us at the manifestation of the sons of God.” In Mark ix. 2, 3, we read : “And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves : and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow ; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” St. John, one of the witnesses of this scene of surpassing interest and grandeur, says, in allusion to it, “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten the Father.” (John i. 14.) In this respect the

saints are to be "like him," "conformed to his image." They are to be participators in his glory at the resurrection of the just. "Then shall the righteous *shine forth as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. xiii. 43.) "They that be wise shall *shine as the brightness of the firmament*; and they that turn many to righteousness *as the stars for ever and ever*." (Dan. xii. 3.)

Miss H.—I feel more and more interested as you proceed. Will you be good enough to specify any other point of resemblance that may occur to you?

M.—The glorified body of the Saviour is free from all infirmity, and from all liability to suffering and pain. It was not so while he sojourned amongst men. You will remember what was prophetically said concerning him, and how the prophecy received a literal accomplishment: "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." (Isai. lii. 14.) "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isai. liii. 2, 3.) The Captain of our salvation was "made perfect through sufferings;" but the end for which all these sufferings were endured has been accomplished, and he has taken his human nature into the heavenly paradise, where suffering is unknown. In his entire human nature, as well as the Divine—in body as

well as soul—he is all-perfect. And in this respect, also, his saints will be “like him,”—“*conformed to his image.*” A glance at the condition of fallen humanity is sufficient to show us, that sin has entailed many physical as well as moral evils upon the race, from which the holiest and best of men are not exempted. How many of these painful consequences of sin do we witness, even amongst those who constitute the family of God upon earth, the members of the mystical body of Christ! The bodily defects, distortions, and deformities, which thus present themselves to our notice, are manifold. Some have been endured from the womb; others have been caused by accident; and some result from the ravages of disease, or advancing age. The blind, the dumb, the deaf, the lame, the ill-favoured, and the mis-shapen, often remind us of the ruin which sin has brought upon the noble, perfect, and glorious structure of the human frame. But none of these will have a place in the resurrection-body of God’s children. Every defect will be supplied, and every deformity removed. All that is unlovely will be changed, and “these vile bodies,” fashioned “like unto his glorious body,” will shine forth with surpassing splendour, in all the unfading bloom and beauty of immortal youth:—

“Yet these, new rising from the tomb,
With lustre brighter far shall shine;
Revive with ever-during bloom,
Safe from diseases and decline.”

St. Paul says concerning the body of the saint, “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is

sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Cor. xv. 42—44.)

Miss H.—These are, indeed, glorious and animating thoughts. Immortality will, I presume, be another point of resemblance between Christ and his saints?

M.—So we are taught in this blessed word of truth. The glorified body of Christ is immortal ; for the apostle tells us, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him." (Rom. vi. 9.) And our Lord himself says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. i. 18.) In this the saints will resemble him, and "*put on the image of the heavenly.*" "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. xv. 52—54.)

Miss. H—"Whom he did foreknow," will, I presume, comprehend the saints in every age of the church ; because, I observe that there is no limit expressed, and all must have been foreknown from the beginning of the world. The number, therefore, will, I apprehend, be very great who are set apart for this exalted and glorious destiny.

M.—You are quite correct. And you will observe the reason which is assigned, "that he," the

Son, "might be the first-born among many brethren,"—the head and chief of a vast and innumerable multitude,—“at the manifestation of the sons of God.”

Miss H.—It occurs to me that there is a peculiarity in the phraseology of the apostle, in that part of the passage you have just repeated, which seems very happily to confirm the correctness of the construction you have put upon it.

M.—I was about to draw your attention to the peculiarity you have mentioned. It is, in fact, the key to the whole paragraph. Believers are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Perhaps you will remember texts of scripture in which the same idea of the first-born is expressed.

Miss H.—Be kind enough to name those texts, as I do not just now recall them to mind.

M.—After that sublime and comprehensive description of the Divinity of our Lord, which the apostle gives to the Colossians, he adds, “And he is the Head of the body, the church : who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead ; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” (Col. i. 18.) In Rev. i. 5 he is represented as “the first-begotten of the dead.” So in 1 Cor. xv. 20—22: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” At the great day he will appear as the elder Brother, the first-born of the countless family of God, who have all been redeemed and sanctified with his own blood. And

all these, released from the bands of death, restored to a joyful immortality, and conformed to his image, shall be acknowledged and manifested as co-heirs with him of the inheritance in heaven, which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. viii. 17.)

How difficult is it to conceive the rapture, the triumph, the undying joy of that hour, when, from every nation, people, kindred, and tongue, the ransomed of the Lord—the elect—shall be gathered together; and all of them, perfectly conformed to the glorious image of the God-man, their elder Brother, shall be presented by him, spotless and unblameable, before the throne, as the fruit of his sufferings and the purchase of his own blood; and shall receive as their right the kingdom and inheritance prepared for their possession from the foundation of the world! Well might the inspired apostles, as we find them doing, exult in this mighty anticipation, and long for that glorious day!

MISS H.—I am quite satisfied that you have opened to me the true meaning of the passage which caused me so much painful solicitude; and that the decree of predestination, referred to by the apostle Paul, has reference solely to the glorification of the saints at the last day. Your explanation commends itself to my judgment as characterized by the clearness and simplicity of truth.

M.—There are two or three general considerations, or arguments, if you like the term better,

which will, I think, if carefully and maturely weighed, confirm you in this conclusion.

Miss H.—If it will not be giving you too much trouble, I shall be glad if you will favour me with them. I should like to have the subject fully before my mind; for I regard the matter as one of considerable importance.

M.—It is always important to have correct views of scriptural truth, even on those subjects which are not usually regarded as fundamental; and I shall not think any trouble ill-bestowed that may assist you in acquiring a right knowledge of the glorious system of revealed truth which is given us for salvation. The first argument I would suggest for your consideration is, that wherever phraseology similar to that of the passage before us is employed in the holy scriptures, and where of the saints it is said they shall “be like him,” “shall bear the image of the heavenly,” be “fashioned like unto his glorious body,” “appear with him in glory,” &c., reference is undeniably made to the glorious events of the last day, and to the perfecting of their redemption at the final advent of their Lord. Although the believer is said to “have put on the new man,” and to be “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,” I do not call to mind any text of scripture in which this peculiar phraseology, or any thing similar to it, is used to describe the moral change which the saints undergo, and in which the work of grace in the heart is set forth under the idea of *conformity* “to the image of His Son.” It is only, therefore, fair and reasonable—nay, a due regard to sound principles of biblical interpretation requires—that we should attach the same

meaning to these words in Romans viii., as modes of expression precisely similar bear in other portions of the sacred volume.

MISS H.—I certainly do not call to mind any such passage of scripture ; and if the principle of interpreting one text that is somewhat obscure, by the light reflected upon it from others, in which there is no such obscurity, be a just one, I do not see how the correctness of your conclusion can be successfully impugned. Will you be kind enough to proceed ?

M.—The second argument I would adduce is, that the view which I have given of the passage is perfectly agreeable to the analogy of faith : it is an interpretation that does not sully the glory, or destroy or lessen in any degree the harmony, of the Divine perfections. Nor does it set aside or impair the moral agency of man : which cannot be truly said of what is generally understood to be the Calvinistic interpretation. This decree of predestination I regard as embracing those whom God foreknew as converted persons, restored to his own moral image in righteousness and true holiness. Thus foreknowing them as his own children, he predestinated them to this great honour—decreed that their fidelity and obedience should be crowned with this great and glorious reward—that he would raise them up at the last day, fashion them in person like unto his Son, the risen and exalted Jesus ; and that thus they should be manifested before all the intelligences of the universe, angels, devils, and men, as the sons and heirs of God. This view is clear and simple, and in harmony with the whole scheme of Divine revelation ; while it

exhibits the purpose of Jehovah, concerning his saints, as invested with a grandeur and importance worthy of the majesty and goodness of God. And by thus regarding the passage as speaking of the predestination of a class, who bear a certain well-defined character, to a great and suitable reward, and not the predestination of certain capriciously-favoured individuals to bear that character, we stand clear of giving any sanction or countenance to the horrible and unscriptural doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation; a fiction which reflects dishonour upon the Almighty, while it often proves to be a stumbling-block in the way of the weak, and serves to promote Antinomianism and infidelity.

Miss H.—I painfully felt that the view I had of predestination before the commencement of our conversation, appeared to be in opposition to some parts of the word of God; nor could I at all reconcile it with the character which God has revealed of himself. I am rejoiced to find that the predestination spoken of by the apostle, while it is infinitely worthy of God, and agrees perfectly with the holy scriptures, carries with it no such consequences as those which I cannot separate from my former view, and which appear to me to be very revolting. If you have a further argument to strengthen this interpretation, will you state it?

M.—A third and, to my mind, conclusive argument is suggested by the expression, “that he might be the first-born among many brethren;” which, you will observe, is the reason assigned by the apostle why believers are thus “predestinated be conformed to the image of his Son:” thus

but it was not only for their happiness, and the glory of Christ ; by whom, and for the redemption of whose infinite glories and perfections things were created. It appears to me very difficult—I may say impossible—to understand in any plain, natural sense, the Lord Jesus can be “the first-born among many brethren” except (as previously explained) he be understood to be the first-born from the dead, or “the first-born of them that slept.” It is true that he is called in the Epistle to the Colossians, to be “the first-born of every creature ;” that is, born before all creature—“begotten before all worlds.” But this chiefly refers to his Divine nature, which is eternal and eternal. In this respect he cannot have any brethren.” There are not, and there can be no one like him. As the Father’s “only-begotten Son,” “whose goings forth,” or “who has been from of old, from everlasting, and stands and must ever stand alone. With his human nature, he was not the first-born of millions of those who will share the resurrection of the just, and be found at the right hand of the Lord in the day of his coming, were born, lived, and died, before the human nature was formed in the womb of the virgin. It is not in this sense that he can be the first-born among his brethren. Neither does the new-birth at all apply in this case. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled ; “the holy and true” one, who did no sin. Without moral taint, he is the only man who never required to undergo the great moral change implied in being born again. We could not, without blasphemy

speak of him, in reference to the great change which believers experience at the time of their conversion to God, as "the first-born of many brethren." But, keeping in view his glorious resurrection from the dead, and the declaration of the apostle, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection," (Rom. vi. 5,) all appears very clear and easy to our understanding; and we are at no loss for a plain, natural, unforced sense to the apostle's words, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."

Miss H.—I perceive the force of this argument as you have put it; and discover a clearness, and beauty, and fulness of meaning in the passage, of which I had previously no idea. Regarded in this light, there appears to be a degree of self-consistency, and a manifest harmony with the character and word of God, which I never perceived before.

M.—And you may add, also, a remarkable agreement with the chapter of which it is part. This is what I would call my fourth argument, confirmatory of the interpretation I have put on the apostle's words; but it has been to a considerable extent anticipated in my previous remarks. I have already shown how the whole scope of the chapter sanctions this view of the case. The glorious resurrection of the believer's body, to complete his salvation from all the consequences of sin,—“the redemption of the body,” as the apostle expresses it,—is the subject which, throughout a great part

of the chapter, particularly engages the thoughts, and employs the pen, of the inspired writer. It is not, therefore, an idea gratuitously introduced to remove or meet a difficulty, but one which arises fairly and naturally out of a calm, dispassionate, and impartial investigation of the words of the inspiring Spirit.

MISS H.—There is a part of the passage under consideration on which you have not yet made any observations. I refer to the thirtieth verse: “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Will you be kind enough to favour me with your thoughts on these words?

M.—It was my intention to do so. You will remember that I specified three points as suggested for our consideration; and the third I named is contained in this verse, which describes that unvarying process of moral renovation by which the saints are fitted for the honour and happiness they are predestined to enjoy.

MISS H.—If I truly apprehend your meaning, it is, that all those who are comprehended in Jehovah’s decree of predestination become fitted by one process, by the same work of moral renovation, for that honour and blessedness which their heavenly Father had determined to confer upon them hereafter.

M.—Exactly so: and you will observe that the several stages or gradations of this work of grace are described in this passage. “Foreknown” as saints, they are “predestinated” to the glory and honour of being “conformed to the image of his

Son," and, in due time, "called," "justified," and "glorified."

MISS H.—I observe that the apostle speaks entirely in the past tense.

M.—It is by no means an uncommon thing for the inspired writers to speak of future events as if they were already past; the Holy Spirit, perhaps, intending thereby to intimate the absolute certainty of their accomplishment. You will remember an instance of this kind in the scriptures, which I cited a short time ago from the prophecies of Isaiah, relating to the humiliation of Christ: "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." (Isai. lii. 14. See also Isai. liii.) Here the prophet, throughout the chapter, speaks of circumstances, as if already past, which did not actually transpire until several centuries had elapsed. You will have no difficulty in adverting to other instances of a similar kind, in which the future is thus anticipated. It is so in the passage before us. It would be putting a very narrow and inadequate construction upon the apostle's words, to regard him as speaking only of those who had, when he wrote, finished their course, and entered into rest: he is therefore to be understood here as anticipating the period, when the whole host of the redeemed shall be assembled at the right hand of their Lord appearing in his glory; and as showing us the process through which they have been conducted to that glorious elevation.

MISS H.—But, in describing this process, I observe that the apostle makes no mention of conditions; and it would seem as if all this were done,

—as if they were “predestinated,” “called,” “justified,” and “glorified”—unconditionally : yet I think it cannot be so.

M.—Certainly not. Apply to this case the principle of biblical interpretation which has been already mentioned, and bring the light of other scriptures to bear upon and explain this verse ; then that which creates a momentary difficulty vanishes at once. The salvation of a sinner is conditional throughout ; and, although we do not find these conditions expressed, they are necessarily implied, in this passage, because so clearly insisted upon elsewhere in the sacred volume. The word of God teaches, with all possible clearness, that none are justified or pardoned, until they obey the Gospel call, and turn to God by true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. With equal clearness and consistency, it teaches that none are glorified but those who are faithful unto death, and continue to the end in holiness and obedience to God. And only those are included in the great decree of predestination, which he has promulgated in His holy word, who, as moral agents, comply with all these conditions of the gospel, and, in accordance with God’s purpose to save all who do so, are, consequently, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

Miss H.—You convince me more and more of the importance of comparing scripture with scripture, in order to ascertain its true meaning ; and I see how often difficulties vanish when this is done. Permit me to ask what you understand to be meant where it is said, “ Whom he did predestinate, them he also called ? ”

M.—It is a mode of expression which denotes

the employment of means to awaken men to reflection and repentance, and "turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." In his great love and compassion to sinners, God, who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, employs various methods to overcome the worldliness, and stubbornness, and unbelief of men, and induce them to "flee from the wrath to come." You will find a very graphic account of some of these dealings of God with sinful men in Job xxxiii. 14—26, and in Psalm cvii. 1—43. He calls sinners by his written word; whose precepts and doctrines, threatenings and promises, examples of judgment and examples of mercy, are all given to make men wise unto salvation. He calls them by the secret and powerful operations of his Holy Spirit upon their hearts, by the diversified dispensations of his providence, and especially by the ministry of reconciliation, as the grand instrumentality expressly instituted for this purpose: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor. v. 20.) Thus setting before us life and death, blessing and cursing, Jehovah does all that can be done with us, short of destroying our free agency, to save us from our sins, and prevail upon us to "choose life, that we and our seed may live." "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called:" but you will observe that it is not said he called these alone. On the contrary, our Lord tells us, that "many be called, but few chosen." (Matt. xx. 16; xxii. 14.) Many are "called," with whom all the means that are employed to promote their repentance and salvation prove utterly ineffec-

tual, and who continue to harden their hearts, and cleave to their sins, despite all that is done both by God and man to reclaim them from the error of their ways.

MISS H.—Speaking as he does here only of those who were foreknown as saints, I suppose it was not necessary for St. Paul particularly to specify those conditions, repentance and faith, &c., which must have been fulfilled in them, or they could never have become saints at all. That they had come to God by the way of his own appointment, would, of course, be understood; therefore he cannot mean that all were “justified” who were “called.”

M.—Our Saviour’s words, “Many are called, but few chosen,” show that the fulfilment of the conditions is understood and assumed, though not expressed. “Whom he called, them he also justified,” because they were “obedient to the heavenly calling.” They did not resist, but yielded to, the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, and turned from their sins and came unto God by penitent faith. The process, so to speak, by which sinful men are actually saved, is the same in all cases; but, with regard to many persons, it never advances beyond the first stage, the “calling,” because they do not attend to that “calling.” If they would yield to and obey the heavenly calling, as the apostle did on his way to Damascus, then, as in his case, the saving process would be carried on in them through all its successive stages, until it reached its consummation. In those who do obey the call of God, the work of salvation is progressive. There is the exercise of evangelical repentance; faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, appro-

priating the merits of his infinite atonement. This their "faith is counted for righteousness;" and "being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," and "the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit that they are the children of God."

Miss H.—I observe that the apostle, in describing this process here, makes no mention of regeneration at all. Can you explain the reason of this?

M.—It is sufficiently accounted for by the fact, that regeneration does not, apart from justification, form another gradation in the process, which the apostle with characteristic brevity designed to exhibit. "Justification," though commonly used in the scriptures to denote simply the pardon of sin, that act of God which so materially changes the relation in which the sinner stands towards himself, is a blessing which God never bestows alone; for, coincident with the relative change, and inseparable from it, the penitent believer is made regenerate—he experiences a real inward change: "his nature is turned, his mind transformed in all its powers;" being "in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Here, therefore, "justification," which is one branch of a sinner's salvation, is put for the whole, and must be understood as denoting, in its entirety, that great moral change which takes place at the time of the soul's conversion. For the sake of clearness and order, and in accordance with the examples of the New-Testament writers, it is necessary carefully to distinguish the several elements which enter into it: but the change is one; for, at the same moment and by the same act of mercy,

the sinner's guilt is cancelled, his fallen spirit is renewed, and he is constituted a child of God.

MISS H.—It is added, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” This, I apprehend, does not refer to the glory of the last day, but to the intermediate state of those who, having entered into rest, are sometimes spoken of as the “glorified saints?”

M.—Certainly. They are glorified, after enduring to the end, standing fast in the liberty where-with Christ has made them free. When they have fulfilled the condition on which alone eternal life is promised, and kept themselves in the love of God, pure and unspotted from the world; when, like Paul, they have fought a good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith; the great Master says, “Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” (Dan. xii. 13.) They are received to glory, to the mansions of the blessed; where, free from pain and sorrow, and placed above the reach of temptation and sin, they await the fulfilment of their glorious destiny on the morning of the resurrection: “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Titus ii. 13.)

MISS H.—The exposition of this passage of scripture which you have kindly given me, will teach me to form a different estimate of the goodness of Almighty God, from that which I had before our conversation on this subject. I now see that Jehovah's decree of predestination is not a merciless decree which shuts out millions of human beings from heaven, without affording them either

the hope or the possibility of salvation ; but a decree of pure, unbounded benevolence and love, in every way worthy of himself, being simply the enunciation of his gracious purpose, that all who obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall, of his abounding grace and goodness, be rewarded with immortality and everlasting life.

M.—The subject considered in this light also presents to Christian believers a delightful and encouraging view of the future. What a brilliant and a blissful destiny awaits them ! How far transcending all our imaginings the glory and honour with which they will be crowned !

“ The thought of such amazing bliss
Should constant joys create.”

It is calculated to give abundant comfort in the temptations and trials of life ; it should animate us to a faithful and unwearied discharge of all our present duties ; and serve as an incentive to the pursuit of that “ holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” “ Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (1 John iii. 3.)

MISS H.—And I am quite sure that it removes a source of discouragement and temptation out of the way of those who feel the burden of sin, and are earnestly seeking after salvation. The fear of being in the number of those whom God had not predestinated to be saved, has caused me many hours of anxiety and deep distress.

M.—Your case is by no means a singular one. I have met with several young inquirers after truth, who have been similarly affected. Many persons have been greatly discouraged by the manner in which this passage has been interpreted :

there is, however, no reason for discouragement when it is rightly understood, but the contrary. It is a source of great encouragement to the sincere seeker after God to know, that Jehovah's decree of predestination is such that all may place themselves under it, and that every one may put his hand to the bond of this covenant—thus becoming interested in all its gracious provisions. It is, by the grace of God, in the power of all to put themselves amongst those who are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son ;” because it is, by the assistance of the same all-sufficient grace, which is withheld from none that ask it, in the power of all to comply with the conditions required of them in the gospel. We are “called ;” if we obey the call, repent, and believe the gospel, we shall assuredly be “justified” and accepted of God. By the grace of Christ, in the exercise of watchfulness and prayer, we can hold fast the beginning of our confidence, and persevere in holiness, to the end of life. Then we shall be “glorified ;” and “when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory,” and we “shall be satisfied when,” on that joyful resurrection morn, we “awake with his likeness.”

Miss H.—I know not how to express my obligations. You have relieved my mind from a weighty burden that oppressed it.

M.—I am sufficiently compensated in having been able to satisfy your scruples concerning this passage of scripture ; and shall be happy, to the extent of my ability, hereafter to assist you as a sincere and earnest inquirer after the truth as it is in Jesus.

CONVERSATION II.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”—ISAIAH.

“The Bible explains the Bible.”—ST. AUGUSTINE.

MISS H.—You gave me permission to refer to you when I required your assistance. I have availed myself of your kindness, in requesting you again to favour me with a visit; and shall feel obliged if you will give me your views on a point nearly related to the subject of our former conversation.

MINISTER.—Having no special engagement that requires my attention at present, I shall have pleasure in devoting a little time to the conversation you propose. You have, I hope, been searching the scriptures, to satisfy yourself that the views and principles I expressed in our last conversation are in accordance with Divine revelation.

MISS H.—I have, sir, and not only am I persuaded that you gave me a correct interpretation of the passage which caused me so much anxiety, but I find that the more perfectly the great scheme of redemption, as it is revealed in the holy scriptures, is understood, the more clearly does it appear that God's love to our race is boundless, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

M.—Yes; and whenever sentiments are held that do not harmonise with this broadly-revealed fact,

they originate in imperfect apprehensions of the truth embodied in the inspired volume. Will you state what is the new difficulty you have met with?

MISS H.—I have been reading the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where, in the fifth verse, the apostle speaks thus :—"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." This, in connexion with the preceding verse, presents a difficulty to my mind, as seeming to favour that view of predestination with which I was so much perplexed before our last conversation. I remember how your explanations relieved my mind on that occasion; and I feel persuaded that, dark and mysterious as the whole passage appears to my inexperience, the obscurity exists more in my own perceptions than in the passage itself; and that you will now, as then, be able so to open this scripture to my understanding as to show its perfect harmony with the character of God, and with other parts of his inspired word.

M.—I trust I shall be able to satisfy you that the apostle does not in this scripture, any more than in the other, give the least countenance to that doctrine which would limit the saving benefits of the atonement within narrower confines than those which enclose the entire human race. But before proceeding to an explanation of the verse itself, allow me to make a few preliminary observations. The sacred scriptures are in some parts necessarily obscure, from the very nature of those revelations which they contain concerning the being and

attributes of God ; while, in other respects, there is a veil of obscurity designedly cast over them, which makes us feel how necessary is the prayer of the Psalmist, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." This has been, doubtless, so ordered in the wisdom of God, that man may search for the truth as for hidden treasure, and seek to know the mind of the inspiring Spirit by comparing scripture with scripture. St. Peter, speaking of St. Paul's Epistles, says, "In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (2 Peter iii. 16.) To this partial obscurity of the holy scriptures, combined with man's natural tendency to corrupt and pervert the truth of God, it may be attributed, that the wonderful scheme, devised in the wisdom and goodness of God for the redemption of self-destroyed man, has been so greatly misunderstood, and consequently misrepresented.

But no view that has been taken of it, amongst those religious bodies who hold the Head, is, to my mind, more surprisingly at variance with the truth, and more calculated to give misleading and dishonouring views of the character and perfections of Almighty God, than that scheme of doctrine adopted by many great and eminent men, under various modifications, yet leading substantially and logically to the same results, which would restrict the redeeming love of God to a chosen few, excluding a large portion of the human family from the possibility of obtaining salvation and eternal life. This scheme, in reality, and by inevitable conse-

quence, fixes the blame of their ruin and perdition—not where Christ places it, on their own avoidable wilfulness and unbelief, but—upon a supposed decree of predestination, proceeding from Almighty God, which renders the salvation of the non-elect as impossible as it makes that of the favoured elect a matter of absolute certainty.

No man can read the Bible carefully without being convinced that it sometimes refers to a predestination of believers. That this has been a fruitful subject of controversy, is well known; numerous essays and volumes have been written concerning it, not always in the most kindly spirit towards opponents, and often with scarcely any other result than to darken and mystify the entire subject, and involve the minds of sincere inquirers after truth in a labyrinth of interminable perplexity.

Supposing it were true that no satisfactory exposition could be given of those passages of God's word which speak of predestination, on any other hypothesis; yet that theory of predestination which was broadly set forth by Calvin, and is held, with some slight modifications, by those who have substantially adopted his doctrinal views, assuredly cannot be true,—involving, as it does, the absolute and unconditional election of certain individuals to salvation and the means of salvation, and the absolute and unconditional predestination of others to damnation and the means of damnation,—for the simple reason, that the necessary and unavoidable consequences of that theory are directly opposed to many plain and unequivocal declarations of inspired truth. But, as I showed you in our former conversation, these

passages do admit of a very different and satisfactory explanation ; such as agrees with the whole tenor of the scriptures, causes the glorious scheme of man's redemption to shine out with full-orbed, untarnished splendour, and renders equal homage and honour to the sovereignty and to the mercy, to the justice and to the grace, of God.

MISS H.—Our former conversation has satisfied me of the truth of your observations, so far as they apply to the passage which speaks of predestination in the Epistle to the Romans ; and I do not doubt their truth in reference to the one concerning which I have taken the liberty of consulting you on the present occasion. But will you allow me to inquire, How is it that so large an amount of misapprehension on this subject has prevailed amongst those who, from the nature of their studies, and their character and learning, might be supposed to have been thoroughly informed on this question ?

M.—Without pretending to be able to account for it fully, I am persuaded that one principal cause of the prevailing misapprehension concerning this subject is the confounding of things that differ—the assumption that election and predestination are to be regarded as meaning one and the same thing in the holy scriptures. It is frequently the case that writers on both sides of this vexed question use the words, “election” and “predestination,” as if they were convertible terms. This is misleading. In the Bible the election of believers is one thing, predestination another ; the one relates to what is past, the other to what is future ; one has reference to the recovery of man's moral nature to the favour

and image of God, the other to the restoration of his physical nature from the curse and ruin brought upon it by the fall. The losing sight of these important distinctions has contributed, in no small degree, to involve the subject in obscurity, and increase the difficulties with which it has been surrounded by those misapprehensions concerning it into which many have fallen.

MISS H.—It is as a scriptural question only that I wish for information concerning predestination. The term is used by the inspired writers, and I am anxious to understand the sense in which it is employed by the Holy Spirit.

M.—Your anxiety is a very laudable one ; and I shall readily assist you in further prosecuting the inquiry, “What is that predestination which is taught in the holy scriptures?” We cannot pursue this inquiry by any better method than that to which we had recourse in our last conversation,—bringing the pure light of Divine revelation to shine upon the subject, and making the word of God its own interpreter. The holy scriptures have been too often ignored in these discussions ; and the subject, sufficiently plain and simple in itself, has been abundantly mystified and obscured by metaphysical subtleties, until it has become a sort of bugbear, with which many well-meaning, simple-minded people are afraid to meddle. The prophet’s words are very applicable in this case : “To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isaiah viii. 20.)

MISS H.—In pressing these inquiries upon you, I hope you will not regard me as indulging in a

vain curiosity concerning a matter which is merely speculative. I earnestly desire to know what is the mind of the Spirit on a subject which, I conceive, being matter of Divine revelation, ought not to be considered as non-important.

M.—Scriptural predestination is not certainly to be regarded as a merely speculative subject, but as connected with great practical results.

Whilst there is a possibility of attaching undue importance to trifles, there is also a danger of indulging lax and latitudinarian sentiments concerning matters of faith and revelation; and both these evils should be carefully guarded against. Right apprehensions of scripture truth are always important, because our views and opinions on religious questions materially affect both our experience and our practice. It has been very judiciously observed, "Divine revelation operates through the medium of the understanding. 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' And as a general rule, it will be found that a substantially sound, religious experience never rises, in point of clearness, above the clearness of the views respecting the religious doctrines referring to it. Fundamental error hinders the attainment of such experience altogether; and confused and erroneous notions will produce an effect on it corresponding to their own character. Ordinarily the Holy Spirit operates by the instrumentality of known truth: and as all error is more or less faulty, so will its punishment be perceived in the deficiency and confusion of those feelings which constitute what is generally termed religious experience. That experience seldom either rises above,

or stretches beyond, the views entertained of religious doctrine." Although it is not one of those questions which are to be regarded as fundamental, yet it is of considerable importance that this subject—the predestination of believers—should be rightly apprehended as a matter of Divine revelation, because of its practical bearing and influence. Understood in its scriptural import, this doctrine becomes a source of abundant encouragement to sincere, pious souls, while it throws no dark shade on the character of the Righteous Sovereign of the universe; and it supplies cogent motives animating to the pursuit of holiness, and to persevering diligence in the service of the Lord. But those distorted representations of inspired truth, which have too often been given concerning it, have created a great amount of perplexity and discouragement in many newly-awakened, earnest inquirers after salvation; and they have also furnished occasion to the deceitful heart to indulge in "the deceivableness of unrighteousness," and supplied "reasons of excuse from serious application to the work of salvation, and for palliatives of neglect and offence."

MISS H.—Permit me to request that you will, as you did in explaining the passage in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, commence by showing to whom the apostle refers in this text, where he says, "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children." Who are comprehended in the pronoun "*us*?"

M.—It will be necessary to refer to the foregoing verses to supply an answer to your query; and if you will take the Bible, and read with me

I will endeavour to point out to you the apostle's meaning. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus ;" that is, to the saints at Ephesus, and also the saints, or believers, in other places,—all the faithful in Christ Jesus. This Epistle—it was the case with all the other Epistles included in the sacred canon—was intended not only for those to whom it was immediately addressed, but for all the churches of Christ in Asia, and indeed in all places, and through all generations ; for the apostolic writings were designed to be a rule of faith and practice to all who should embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, to the end of time. Paul's style of writing, in the several epistles which were addressed by him to the primitive churches, was usually terse, laconic, and elliptical, so as not unfrequently to become, in consequence of this, somewhat obscure. Hence it is not likely that he would use words conveying simply a repetition of the same general idea, and describe these believers as the "saints at Ephesus," and also as "the faithful in Christ Jesus." But when we take into consideration the fact that, although writing directly to the church at Ephesus, which was the metropolis of that part of Asia, he was addressing all the Asiatic churches, and, indeed, providing for the instruction of future generations, his meaning becomes sufficiently obvious ; and we regard "the saints at Ephesus" as denoting the believers in that city, and "the faithful in Christ Jesus" as comprehending believers in all other places.

"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our

Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." The parenthetical style of Paul, which is a very remarkable characteristic of his writings, must be kept in view while reading this passage; and it is chiefly from disregarding this, that the obscurity or difficulty which surrounds this text arises. Either by making a slight transposition of the words, or by putting what is parenthetical within brackets, the sense becomes manifestly this, That he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, to this end, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, according as he hath chosen us in him,—chosen all who become true believers in Christ to be his children and heirs,—before the foundation of the world. It was the plan of God, who foresaw the fall of man and all its consequences, a plan arranged and determined before the foundation of the world, to choose all who believe in Christ—for that is the meaning of being "in Christ"—to be his elect, his children, partakers of the great salvation, and his heirs: and, in accordance with this plan or purpose, he bestowed upon the saints at Ephesus, and continues to bestow upon the faithful in Christ Jesus, all spiritual blessings, that they may be holy and without blame before him in love. This

is simply what the apostle asserts in the passage before us. Associating himself with these saints at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus, he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ : [according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,] that we should be holy and without blame before him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

It will be observed, that Paul³ does not recognise here any distinction between Jews and Gentiles ; and for us to introduce any such distinction is perfectly gratuitous and unnecessary, and only serves to create embarrassment and confusion in the mind of the reader. But speaking of himself, (who was a Jew,) of "the saints at Ephesus," (who were, for the most-part, if not exclusively, Gentile converts,) and of "the faithful in Christ Jesus," without any limit of nation or of time, he says, "Having predestinated *us* unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Paul, "the saints which were at Ephesus," and "the faithful in Christ Jesus," are, therefore, the parties who are the subjects of the predestination spoken of in the text before us.

MR. H.—From those biblical dictionaries and commentaries to which I have had an opportunity of referring, I learn that the word translated in our version "to predestinate," signifies, generally, to

define, or describe, or circumscribe, or appoint beforehand. I believe this is correct?

M.—Perfectly so; and, when used concerning believers, as it is here, and in the text we have already considered at some length, it implies the appointment of their destiny beforehand. That it was so understood by our translators, is manifest from their choosing the significant and expressive word “pre-destinate” to convey its meaning; a compound term, which denotes pre-ordination to a certain destiny. But, in the protracted controversy relating to the predestination of believers, the dispute has not been so much concerning the meaning of the term itself as it occurs in the scriptures,—for on this point there is but little, if any, difference between Calvinist and Arminian writers,—as concerning the design or object of this predestination. What is that to which believers are predestinated or pre-ordained? What is that destiny to which, beforehand, they are appointed? Now, the apostle answers this inquiry very distinctly, in the verse under consideration: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

MISS H.—You have now come to that which constitutes my principal difficulty in this passage. In the former case you showed that the predestination of saints to be “conformed to the image of his Son” means, that they shall be made like him in the resurrection of their bodies; but here the expression is very different; for it is said, “Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.”

M.—It does not surprise me that you are some-

what perplexed by this different form of expression ; for I remember how the same difficulty presented itself to my own mind, until I saw, on maturely considering the whole chapter in which this verse is found, that it is really only another method of designating the same thing.

MISS H.—Do I understand you aright that “predestination to be conformed to the image of his Son,” and “predestination to the adoption of children unto himself by Jesus Christ,” are one and the same?

M.—That is precisely my view.

MISS H.—Be kind enough to explain this ; for it is at present far from being clear to my apprehension.

M.—A careful reading of the New Testament has led me to this conclusion, that the believer’s adoption into the family of God consists of two parts, different as to time, place, and circumstances ; and that there is a distinction, clearly recognised by the inspired writers, between what is merely preliminary in this adoption, and that which is final ; and between that which is private and personal, relating to themselves only, and that which is public and general. The observance, on our part, of this scriptural distinction between things that, in many respects, differ very much—between the commencement and the consummation of the Christian’s personal salvation—is necessary to a clear and proper understanding of predestination as that subject is placed before our minds by the wisdom of God : and the overlooking of this has caused much of the perplexity and difficulty which many persons, whose views were substan-

tially sound and correct, have manifestly brought to the investigation of this question.

The Christian believer is only virtually adopted as a child of God at the time of his conversion ; when that great moral change passes upon him by which he is brought into a state of reconciliation with God, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus. There does not appear to be any distinct and specific act, on the part of Almighty God, in the adoption of which the believer then becomes the subject, as there is in the justification of penitent believers, and in the regeneration of their fallen nature, both of which are distinct and specific acts in the order of thinking, if not in the order of time. But believers, thus pardoned and regenerate, receive adoption as a blessing or privilege, involved in, and flowing immediately from, these operations of Divine grace upon the soul, and become the children of God. Because they are sons, the Father sends "forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father." They are constituted heirs ; but their inheritance, as in the case of minors, is yet in the future, held in reversion for them ; as Peter says, "reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Nevertheless, upon them is bestowed the earnest of their future inheritance ; for they receive, "not the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God : and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer

with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. viii. 15—17.) Thus the Father recognises their sonship, and puts his own distinguishing mark upon them as his children and heirs, "sealing them by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption," as the apostle says in this Epistle ; or, as he somewhat varies the expression in the chapter now before us, "sealing them with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." The present adoption of believers is, therefore, merely virtual and preliminary. They are numbered with the children, but not brought into their Father's house ; they are recognised as heirs, but are not yet put in possession of their rightful inheritance.

MISS H.—I see the distinction you have pointed out. It is an idea that never occurred to me before, that the believer's adoption here is only the preparatory part of a process which is hereafter to be completed. But, I fear I have interrupted your observations, which I find to be interesting and instructive.

M.—I was going on to say, further, that our adoption in this life is private—it takes place in secret. The new birth of the believer is an act of God, of which none can have cognizance at the time when it occurs, except God himself, and the individual upon whom the gracious work is wrought. It is the setting up of that kingdom of God in the heart which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ;" but "the kingdom of God" in this sense "cometh not with observation." And that act of justification—the

pardon of sin—from which, perhaps, the privilege of adoption more immediately flows, is an act that takes place in the Divine mind ; an act, therefore, which is secret and invisible, of which there can be no witnesses ; which is indicated by no outward sign, and which becomes known only to the individual himself, when “the Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.” There is no spectator of that wonderful process of Divine mercy, whereby man’s moral nature is changed, and he is “translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” It becomes obvious to others only through its results.

This adoption is also of a personal and individual character. It affects each person separately. Men are not made Christians, and brought into God’s family, by companies and communities ; but individually. That act of Divine grace which transforms a guilty man into a child and heir of God, affects none besides himself, unless it be incidentally, and by its consequences. Each believer, as he exercises a penitent faith in the atoning Lamb of God, receives into his own heart the Spirit of adoption, as the pledge or earnest of his inheritance in a better life ; the whole process being in its own nature a preliminary one—a preparation for something more complete to be realised hereafter—that future adoption by which the restoration of his entire nature will be perfected.

To illustrate the meaning I wish to convey, I would refer to the custom of betrothment between parties contracting marriage ; which you will remember was common amongst the ancient Jews ; the parties sometimes being betrothed for sever

years before the marriage actually took place. In such a case, the betrothal would bear the same relation to the actual marriage, as the present adoption of believers bears to that which awaits them hereafter—the one being preliminary, and having reference to the other. The union of the man and woman was not completed when the betrothal took place; so neither is the believer's adoption completed when he becomes a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Miss H.—I now begin to apprehend your meaning. You regard the apostle as speaking to the Ephesians of something which awaits believers hereafter, when he says, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

M.—I do; for there is, undeniably, a future adoption of believers spoken of in the holy scriptures; that which is substantially, and in the highest sense, "the adoption"—the substance, of which the other may be said to be the shadow—the consummation of that, of which the other was the beginning—the apprehension and possession of those great benefits, of which the adoption experienced in the present life is but the earnest and the pledge.

That future adoption will comprehend the realization of the dignity, glory, and blessedness which are now apprehended only by faith. These will be no longer matters of faith, but of sight; no longer objects of hope, but of fruition. Included in the adoption, there will be the redemption of the bodies of the saints from the humiliation and corruption to which they have been subjected in the grave;

their change to immortality, and their perfect conformity to the glorified likeness of Christ's humanity. This will be followed by the manifestation of the saints as the sons of God; their presentation to the Father, in one body, as "the bride, the Lamb's wife," "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing"—the fruit of his sufferings and the purchase of his blood; their formal and judicial recognition by the Father as his children; and the actual assumption and enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance prepared for them as an everlasting possession.

This it is—the redemption of the body, and its investiture with incorruption and immortality, with all the glorious concomitants of the resurrection—that will constitute that adoption of believers to which they are predestinated by an irreversible decree of Jehovah, "according to the purpose of his own will."

Miss H.—I am reminded by your remarks that the redemption of the body is spoken of by the apostle as "the adoption." The passage is in eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

M.—You are quite correct. Have the kindness to read it, beginning at the twentieth verse.

Miss H.—"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of th

Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (Rom. viii. 20—23.)

M.—On a careful examination of this passage, you will observe that, with intense desire and longing, Paul, and those who with him had first received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, (both in his ordinary influence as the Spirit of adoption, and also in his miraculous energies, to demonstrate that the truth they were commissioned to preach to the world was a message from God,) were looking forward to the adoption,—to that which is really and properly the believer's adoption,—the redemption of the body from corruption and the grave, with all the glorious accompaniments and sequences of that event. This is sufficiently plain and unmistakable. St. Paul, and his fellow-saints, had already received the first-fruits of the Spirit ; the Spirit of adoption bearing witness with their spirits that they were the children of God ; but still they were looking forward to "the adoption," which he affirms to be "the redemption of the body."

MISS H.—I am much interested in discovering, as you proceed, how beautifully one part of the word of God sheds light upon another. Can you refer me to any other scripture bearing upon this particular point ?

M.—I can ; for in perfect harmony with the teaching of the great apostle of the Gentiles, our Lord himself represents glorified saints as the children of God, "*because they are the children of the resurrection ;*" a remarkable phraseology, which manifestly refers to that adoption of believ-

ers at the last day, of which St. Paul here makes mention.

MISS H.—To what passage do you wish me to turn?

M.—Refer to the twentieth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of the resurrection, thinking that, on this subject, they could easily embarrass the great Teacher in his discourse, came and propounded this question, concerning the woman who was successively married to seven brothers, and survived them all: "Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." (Luke xx. 33—36.) "They are the children of God." Wherefore? Because they have received "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body," "being the children of the resurrection."

MISS H.—These are certainly the highest possible authorities, to which you have referred as sanctioning the interpretation you have given of the text that caused my difficulty. I perceive that you are fully borne out in regarding this "predestination to the adoption of children" as having reference to the redemption of the body.

M.—The future adoption to which believers are thus predestinated involves only the restoration of

the physical part of their nature ; their intellectual and moral nature having been previously restored, by the grace of God in Christ, to its pristine purity, and glory, and perfection. A mighty change—a great moral renovation—takes place in man, when, being made a new creature, he receives the Spirit of adoption. A further change is experienced when the ransomed spirit escapes from its earthly tenement, and enters triumphantly into the paradise of God, ceasing to exercise its functions through the medium of those impaired organs by which in this world it thinks, and speaks, and acts ;—a change, the nature and extent of which we are not at present capable of comprehending. But the final change by which the restoration of his entire nature will be accomplished, is that which will take place at the end of time, when “all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth ;” “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality, and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” The whole man has been shattered and ruined by the fall ; the *moral* nature vitiated ; the *intellectual* blighted and impaired ; the *physical* shorn of its glory and immortality. The full extent of this ruin—how fearfully man is fallen—how terrible are the effects of the curse brought upon him by sin—we cannot at present rightly apprehend ; for we can now form only a very imperfect conception of the glorious and perfect creature that man was, even in his material construction and appearance, when the Creator smiled upon him as the head

of this lower creation, and pronounced all that he had made to be "very good." And not until that restorative process, which is now going on through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, shall be consummated; by the reunion of the purified spirit and the glorified body of the saints, will the idea, in all its vastness, grandeur, and sublimity, be present to our minds; for then we shall see man perfectly restored, and the curse and all its consequences will be done away. The physical effects of the curse upon him are the last that will be abolished; and how humiliating and revolting are these! Look at the weakness and the diseases, the deformities and imperfections, to which flesh is heir. Fearfully and wonderfully is man made! his entire conformation showing how the Creator designed the material, as well as the mental and moral, structure to be productive of abundant, ecstatic, and endless enjoyment; but, fallen under the curse, it has become the organ of fearfully aggravated suffering and pain. Then follow man to the grave, where death is doing its work of degradation and dissolution. The form once so beautiful, and so tenderly beloved, is hidden away in the dust; for even affection itself can no longer bear to look upon it, and turns away from the sad spectacle in sorrow and disgust; and there it dissolves and moulders, passing through a succession of revolting, humbling changes, until it returns, "earth to earth;" and all that is left of the once noble, stately structure, so richly displaying, even in its impaired condition, the manifold wisdom of God, is a handful of dust. But this part of the curse shall also be done away by the adoption, "to

wit, the redemption of the body" of the saints. Their physical nature shall feel, even as the moral and intellectual has done, the power of the great Restorer, and be renewed in all its primitive perfection and glory ; thus the apostle says, in a passage quoted in our former conversation, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

This is the adoption to which saints are predestinated ; a great and mighty act of God's power and love, whereby his people, in their entire nature, shall be restored and delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. How worthy is this of the great prominence given to it in the word of God, and how does it magnify the grace and mercy of our heavenly Father, that he has pre-ordained his children, whom he foreknew, to a destiny so transcendently happy and glorious,—“ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will! ”

Miss H.—There is certainly an importance and grandeur connected with that future adoption of believers, which renders it fit and suitable to be the subject of a solemn decree of predestination, such as you have shown to be contained in the holy scriptures.

M.—Perhaps this will appear yet more fully, if you consider that it will be a formal, final, judicial act on the part of the Triune God ; not like that adoption we experience here, which is virtual,

and merely preparatory to something beyond itself. It will be the completion and consummation of their destiny—a grand, sovereign, judicial procedure, whereby the everlasting Father will fulfil all his covenant-engagements with the incarnate Son, as the great federal Head and Representative of the human family, and accomplish all his gracious promises made to his own people. You will observe, that the language of this passage is peculiarly expressive, attributing this adoption to the Father *by* the Son,—“the adoption of children unto himself by Jesus Christ.” This accords exactly with the apostle’s words to the Philippians, “We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) Made like him,—conformed to his image in perfection, glory, and immortality,—he shall present them to their undefiled and incorruptible inheritance, saying, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. xxv. 34.)

MISS H.—This adoption, then, will be a public event?

M.—It will; and in this respect, also, it will be unlike that experienced on earth. All intelligent beings throughout the universe, as far as we know them,—in heaven, and earth, and hell,—will be witnesses of the adoption and glorious manifestation of the sons of God. And all holy beings will rejoice in this fulfilment of their exalted destiny, so worthy of the perfections and purposes of him

who hath pre-appointed them to it, and will ascribe "blessing; and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

MISS H.—Your previous remarks have already suggested another point of difference.

M.—Yes. It will be a general adoption, including all the saints of every time and nation. In that grand public transaction will be comprehended the whole of the great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and tongues, and kindred, and people, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." (Mark xiii. 27.) "Gathering together in one" (one body) "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth,"—all the saints that have passed away to the paradise of God, and all that still remain on earth,—all the glorified spirits of the just that are before the throne, and their bodies which are slumbering in the dust of death,—"they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," bearing the image of the heavenly Adam, exalted to undying honour, and radiant with a glory that shall never fade away.

MISS H.—These remarks are to me deeply interesting, not only because of the information they impart on a subject I have been so anxious to investigate, but because they are suggestive also,—
ing up a train of thoughts which, to myself,

are altogether new. I have often, in reading the scriptures, been impressed by the earnestness of desire with which the New-Testament writers appear to look forward to the future. I see the reason now as I never did before.

M.—It is remarkable with what intense longing they anticipate this triumphant consummation of their destiny at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the object of that noble ambition with which they were inspired; it gave animation to their exertions; it filled them with resignation and hope in suffering; it was regarded with holy joy in the prospect of death; and all their attainments in the Divine life were valued as they brought them nearer to that redemption from evil—that perfect recovery from all the ruinous consequences of the fall—to which they are appointed by Jehovah's decree of predestination.

Mrs H.—This, I remember, is particularly observable in the writings of St. Paul.

M.—It is. How strongly he felt and wrote upon this interesting and animating topic, may be seen in several passages already cited from his Epistles; and many others may be gathered from his writings. To the Philippians he says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high callin

of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 11—14.) To the Colossians he writes, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 3, 4.) He was looking forward to the adoption and its results when, from Rome, and in the prospect of martyrdom, he wrote to Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 6—8.) In that beautiful essay on the resurrection of the saints, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, to which I directed your particular attention in our former conversation, he shows very clearly what is the sense in which believers are predestinated by God to be conformed to the image of his Son, saying, with immediate reference to the resurrection of the body, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.....The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. xv. 45—49.)

MISS H.—If I remember right, St. Peter, also, some passages relating to the same subject.

—He has. That he also was earnestly look-

ing for "the adoption," is evident from several parts of the Epistles which bear his name : "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet. i. 3—5.) "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Verse 13.) "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Pet. v. 4.)

Miss H.—St. John also dwells upon the same topic in a delightful and glowing style ; but I never saw such fulness and beauty in the passage as I do now. He is not less earnest and emphatic than Paul and Peter.

M.—Please turn to the passage, and read it.

Miss H.—"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God : therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John iii. 1—3.)

M.—These passages all go to show how large a place this subject—of the consummation of the

believer's destiny—occupied in the hearts of the New-Testament writers, what importance they attached to it, and the powerful influence it exerted upon their thinkings, and upon their lives; and that they regarded all their attainments in the Christian life only as a means to an end—not as the end they sought, but as the means of attaining that grand consummation at which they aimed—the adoption of children unto God by Jesus Christ, on the morning of the resurrection, and the renovation, perfection, and glory of their whole nature through him, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

MISS H.—You showed me, in our former conversation, that the Old-Testament saints were not destitute of this gracious hope.

M.—They were not. Although their views on this subject were far less clear and accurate than those of the apostles, yet it may be seen, from the Old-Testament scriptures, that Enoch, Job, David, Isaiah, and Daniel, were all looking forward to the adoption, and anticipating the abolition of the curse at the end of time.

MISS H.—I do not allude to it in the way of objection at all; for I am convinced that the explanation you have given me of predestination, as it is spoken of in both the passages upon which I have consulted you, is the correct and scriptural one; but, in the course of my reading, I do not remember to have found the same views of the subject expressed. Consequently they have come to my mind with all the freshness of novelty.

M.—I am quite aware that men of masterly in-

telleet, of great learning, and eminent piety and usefulness, have taken a different, and some a very opposite, view of the subject ; and also, that some of these, Calvin for instance,—men whose piety, talents, learning, and usefulness, entitle them to the highest esteem and respect,—have pushed out their views concerning predestination into consequences most dishonouring to the God of love—consequences that no ingenuity can reconcile with the revelation of Divine truth which he has given us in his word. But, while cherishing the utmost veneration that is due to the character and opinions of great and good men, I cannot lose sight of the fact, that no little mistake and confusion on this subject have arisen from men choosing the beaten path, and taking for granted the correctness of other men's views, instead of bringing their own judgment, sanctified by earnest prayer for the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, to the examination and interpretation of what the holy scriptures teach on this point. The holding of different views concerning this matter, by eminent men, may be a reason why every thing like offensive dogmatising should be carefully avoided, as peculiarly improper and unbecoming under the circumstances ; yet we are to follow even the greatest and best of men, in their views and interpretations of holy Scripture, only so far as they are clearly sustained by the analogy of faith, and the manifest authority of God's own word. A blind submission to human judgment and authority, in the interpretation of revealed truth, is one of the requirements of the Papacy ; and it is one of those arrogant assumptions which stamp the corrupt and apostate church

of Rome with the character of Antichrist. It is a demand to which no man is bound to submit, and to which no man ought to yield. It will be at the peril of our salvation and eternal happiness, that we give up ourselves implicitly to the guidance of fallible men,—and all men are fallible, however powerful, or splendid, or highly cultivated their intellectual endowments may be,—instead of attending to that duty, which is incumbent on every one of us, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the words of eternal life for ourselves, with such help from the views and teachings of others as we may be able to command. My object has been, not to show you what others have believed and taught concerning predestination; but simply to exhibit the subject in the pure light of Divine revelation, divested of those subtleties and sophistries by which it has been obscured and darkened, until the minds of multitudes have been utterly bewildered.

Miss H.—You were kind enough, when I consulted you concerning the passage in Romans viii., to favour me with such an exposition of the chapter as satisfied me, that your interpretation of it was in accordance with the apostle's argument. Would it be agreeable to you to adopt a similar course in the present case? for I think I see already that the explanation you have given me is in harmony with the general scope of the chapter.

M.—You are quite right: a careful examination of the context will show that I have not misrepresented the apostle's meaning. Let us look at it. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of

children by Jesus Christ to himself, [to wit, the redemption of our body,] according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, [when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe] wherein [in which grace] he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ; [he *hath made* us accepted ; *we have* redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins ; but to this future grander destiny we are predestinated, even the adoption ;] wherein [in the riches of his grace] he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence ; [that wisdom and prudence being shown both in those revelations of his will which he has been pleased to make, and in the times and seasons that he chose for making them, especially in this :] having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to [or concerning this] his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself : [that good pleasure of his will concerning the future glorious destiny of his saints, which purpose is,] that in the dispensation of the fulness of times [the end of all times] he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; [the saints in heaven, and those found alive upon earth at Christ's coming ;] even in him : in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, [not actually in possession, but in prospect : 'reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time,'] being predestinated [to this inheritance] according to the purpose

of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ, [whether Jews or Gentiles.] In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, [the Spirit of adoption—God sending forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father,] which [Spirit] is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

Thus the apostle explains himself. He tells us we are “predestinated to the adoption of children.” Afterwards, qualifying and explaining what had gone before, he says, we are “predestinated” to “an inheritance.” This “inheritance” he represents as yet future; the earnest or pledge of which is given, by our being sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, until the redemption of the purchased possession, of which we are made the heirs. Instead of detached portions, let the whole passage be thus taken and interpreted by itself; let the inspired writer be allowed to become the expositor of his own meaning; and it will be found that the predestination which is here spoken of, is not the predestination of certain men to become believers in Christ, but the predestination of believers, as such, to a destiny and a reward inconceivably great and glorious—to receive their perfect bliss and consummation in another and a better life.

Miss H.—I perceive that your interpretation of this fifth verse corresponds with the whole scope of the apostle’s argument, like a part of some beauti-

ful piece of mechanism fitting into its place, and giving fulness, beauty, and perfection to the whole. The passage, so dark and obscure before, when regarded as you have put it, appears to me simple and full of light.

M.—And this view, you are aware, is sustained and borne out by parallel scripture. There is only one passage beside this in which our translators have used the word “predestinate.” On that we have already conversed at length. I hope you have carefully examined the chapter.

MISS H.—You refer to Rom. viii. 29, 30. “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Since our former conversation, I have read and thought upon it, with much care and prayer.

M.—And may I request you to state the result of your investigation of that chapter ?

MISS H.—I am persuaded that in the twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses, the apostle refers to what the saints are to be hereafter, when all the purposes of God’s grace and wisdom shall be accomplished in their perfect redemption, and the recovery of their entire nature from the effects of the fall. I carefully observed, as you suggested, where the apostle uses the parenthesis—which he does very frequently ; and found, as you said, that the chapter contains an epitome of the new state, character, and privileges of the believer ; who is represented, at the close of the preceding chapter, emerg-

ing from the bondage and misery of sin, through Jesus Christ our Lord ; and that, from the ninth verse to the thirty-first, the subject, which runs like a silver thread through the entire passage, is the resurrection of the believer's body, and the glory which shall be revealed in him.

M.—I am glad to find you have been both a diligent and an apt student. Allow me to ask, what is the result of your more deliberate examination of the twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses ?

Miss H.—A full conviction of the correctness of your interpretation. I cannot see that it admits of being explained fully, and in perfect harmony with itself, except when it is regarded as having reference to the redemption and glorification of the believer's body. The key which unlocks the meaning of the passage, appears to me to be in the words, "that he might be the first-born among many brethren." I referred to Col. i. 15, where Christ is said to be "the first-born of every creature ;" but that is evidently predicated of his Divine nature, in which sense he cannot have many brethren : as the Father's only-begotten Son, he must for ever stand alone. I thought of the birth of his human nature ; but remembered that he was not, in that sense, the first-born of men or of saints. Nor could I, for a moment, entertain the supposition that the term "first-born" had any reference to the change in believers which is called the new-birth ; because he was free from all sin—"the Lamb of God, without blemish, and without spot." It must, therefore, have been the apostle's meaning, that he should be "the first-born of many brethren," as he was truly the first to rise from

the dead to immortality ; for I remember that though Lazarus, the young man at the city of Nain, and others, were raised from the dead, it was not to immortality—it was merely the lengthening out of life ; and they all afterwards died, and became subject to the bondage of corruption. On a careful examination of the texts to which you referred me, I see that they suggest a plain, natural, easy sense, in which to understand the apostle's words—"that he may be the first-born among many brethren," as "the first-born from the dead."

M.—You found several passages in which this idea is plainly set forth ?

MISS H.—I did. In 1 Corinthians xv. for instance, it is said, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order : Christ the first-fruits ; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." (Verses 20—23.) In Colossians the self-same word is used. "And he is the Head of the body, the church : who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead ; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Chap. i. 18.) And in the Revelation also : "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," &c. (Chap. i. 5, 6.)

M.—These citations make the apostle's meaning abundantly clear, and show that it is to the likeness of that glorified humanity of Christ, which v

raised from the sepulchre, that the saints are "predestinated to be conformed," that he may be "the first-born" of that countless multitude, who shall constitute the family of God.

Miss H.—This view of predestination appears to me to be quite in harmony with the general tenor and teaching of Divine revelation. The more I examine the subject, the more fully does it, on this ground, commend itself to my judgment and belief.

M.—It certainly requires no metaphysical subtleties to reconcile it with the facts and doctrines of inspired truth, as other schemes of predestination do. There is a simplicity in this view of the subject, and an agreement between it and the whole of the sacred volume, both of which, in my judgment, at once impress it with the stamp of truth. There is no discordance whatever. To predestinate the saints to this lofty and glorious destiny—to fore-ordain that faithful, obedient believers shall be infinitely rewarded at the end of time, by being redeemed from the power of the grave; made like Christ, transcendently glorious; recognised and approved by the Father as children and heirs; crowned with life eternal; and honoured with an incorruptible inheritance—has a fitness and suitability connected with it, that we instinctively approve as infinitely worthy of God, and as being in perfect accordance with all that he has revealed concerning his own character and perfections, and his purposes with regard to man. It is a very different thing from that predestination which many hold; which, either by a positive decree of Almighty God, or by necessary consequence, shuts multitudes from the possibility of being saved,—

**"Consigns their unborn souls to hell,
And damns them from their mothers' womb;"**

the unchangeable predestination of certain men to repent and believe the gospel, and be converted and saved, and of others to be reprobated and damned, so that, as Mr. Toplady—who was a Calvinist of some note in his day—says, "No elect person can perish, and no reprobate can be saved."

MISS H.—There is a vast difference between the construction you have taught me to put upon these texts of scripture, and that scheme of predestination which I was disposed to embrace before I consulted you.

M.—The difference could scarcely be greater. The one is consistent with reason and common sense ; agreeable to the analogy of faith ; does homage to the word of God, without sully the lustre of any of its glorious doctrines ; harmonises with all the Divine perfections ; and leaves unimpaired, and, in fact, untouched, the moral agency of man. But the other brings in with it all the inconsistencies and revolting incongruities which its advocates have manifestly felt to be connected with the Calvinistic theory ; contradicts the word of God, by repudiating the doctrine of universal redemption, which is there so clearly and unequivocally asserted ; sheds dishonour upon the Divine character ; impairs the lustre and harmony of the Divine perfections ; and, converting man into a mere machine, brings upon the Almighty himself, by logical consequence, the blame of the sinner's perdition, by making Jehovah's decree of predestination the cause of all his sins.

MISS H.—I presume, from its being termed "the Calvinistic theory," it was held by Calvin.

M.—It is broadly set forth in his “*Institutes* ;” and the same theory is substantially embodied in the Confession of Faith put forth by the authority of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in 1851.

Miss H.—You spoke of the predestination of some to eternal death. Is there any thing of the kind mentioned in the Bible? I do not remember meeting with any passage of scripture referring to such a subject.

M.—Because there is none. And the total silence of the holy scriptures concerning it is, in my judgment, a very powerful argument in favour of that view with which I have endeavoured to impress your mind. We read of the predestination of saints “to receive the adoption of children,” and to be “conformed to the image of Christ ;” but not a syllable concerning what Calvin himself does not scruple to call that “horrible decree,” by which, it has been asserted, some of the human race have from eternity been predestinated to destruction. Calvin, and other honest advocates of what is called the doctrine of the decrees, felt that they were obliged to invent a predestination of man to perdition, to make their scheme consistent with itself ; for it is a necessary consequence, of which no argument or sophistry has ever yet been able to get rid, that, if some men are absolutely predestinated to salvation and eternal life, and these only will be saved—or, as Calvin expresses it, if “by eternal and unchangeable counsel he hath once appointed whom, in time to come, he would take to salvation”—the others, not so appointed to salvation, are, to all intents and purposes, by the same

“eternal and unchangeable counsel,” appointed to destruction; and the candour which admits the consequence is more to be commended than the sophistry by which some have attempted, without success, to explain it away. But I find no such teaching in the Bible. It is a fiction, fabricated to meet a difficulty, and render the system consistent with itself. The volume of inspired truth knows nothing of the revolting sentiment which Beza held,—“the predestination of men to damnation and the causes of damnation.” Hence, it may be justly concluded that the doctrine of which it is the inseparable counterpart must be false; and that some other interpretation of the subject must be the true one, which does not lead to consequences so “horrible,” and so utterly at variance with what God has revealed concerning himself, and his loving regard to the race of man.

Such an interpretation is that I have endeavoured to give you of the two passages concerning which you consulted me. No such revolting consequences result from it, no such difficulties attend it. Whilst, in the fullest possible sense, it gives to God the entire glory of saving those who, freely accepting his proffered mercy in Christ, are here saved from all the moral effects of sin, and are predestinated to be delivered hereafter from all its physical results, it leaves those who are finally lost altogether without excuse; for their destruction is the necessary consequence, not of their being adjudged to it from the womb, or their being passed over, and therefore rejected, in God’s plan of redeeming mercy, or the withholding from them the effectual grace which is bestowed upon othe

thereby making God a respecter of persons ; but simply of their own avoidable wilfulness and unbelief in rejecting those invitations which others embraced, and despising or neglecting the salvation which others sought and found.

Miss H.—Your explanation is suggestive of some very pleasing thoughts.

M.—Perhaps you will not object to express them, and let me have the benefit of your reflections ?

Miss H.—It seems to me that it exhibits, in a very impressive light, the fulness and perfection of the redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ.

M.—It does. This view of predestination shows that he is, in the grandest possible sense, the Deliverer and the Restorer of our race, saving to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him,—the Redeemer, not only of men's souls, but of their bodies also ; “ putting away sin,” and removing the curse, “ by the sacrifice of himself.” He “ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.” Not that the Old-Testament saints were altogether in darkness in this respect. They had feeble and distant glimmerings of this sublime truth—that the dead should live again—passing before their minds, as appears from occasional passages in the Old-Testament writings ; these, however, were only as the first faint dawnings of the morning spread upon the distant mountains, just sufficient to awaken hope, and animate to confidence in God. But in the gospel it stands broadly revealed,—brought to light in full-orbed, refulgent majesty and glory ; and the saints of God are assured that because

Christ lives they shall live also. From the sepulchre itself they hear a voice of majesty and truth saying unto them, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." We do not look forward, like the saints under former dispensations, to a redeeming work which has yet to be accomplished, and to its results as yet to be made known. The work is done. The Redeemer has come to Zion, and suffered, and died, and rose again, and has abolished death, and ascended up on high, leading captivity captive: "the First and the Last, he that liveth and was dead, and behold he is alive for evermore; and hath the keys of hell and of death." Glorious in his perfected humanity, the first to be restored from the grave to immortality, all his saints are predestinated to be conformed to his image, that he may be the firstborn among many brethren; and, being thus predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, we may go to the grave, and lay down these frail bodies in the dust, or commit our best and dearest ones to corruption and the worm, in sure and certain hope that, profound as the sleep of death may be, we shall again awake; and, however the dust of which these bodies are composed may be dissolved and scattered, yet, under the omniscient eye, and by the almighty power, of Him who first gave it animation, it shall be re-collected, refined from all its grossness

and, rendered incorruptible and immortal, live a spiritual, glorious, heavenly body, fashioned like unto his own glorious body, for ever and ever. In imperishable characters these things are recorded on the pages of the New Testament, that we may go down to the grave in the full assurance of hope. We need not be dismayed, then, however much we may be humbled, at the approach of death. In consigning the bodies of our children or of God's saints to their resting-places in the dust, we sorrow not as those who have no hope.

“ God the Redeemer lives,
And ever from the skies
Looks down and watches all our dust,
Till he shall bid it rise.

“ Array'd in glorious grace,
Shall these vile bodies shine,
And every shape, and every face,
Be heavenly and Divine.”

Miss H.—It appears also to exhibit in a peculiar light the dignity and excellence of the Christian character.

M.—I quite agree with you. The true dignity and importance of human nature are most clearly seen, when we consider what redeemed man is predestined to become. Christianity both sanctifies and elevates human nature. It finds man lowly and degraded through sin, “guilty, polluted, an enemy of God, and an heir of hell.” It brings him into the favour of God ; purifies and restores his moral nature, so deeply fallen and entirely vitiated ; it lifts him up out of the horrible pit and miry clay into which he is sunk, and places him amongst the children of God, and the heirs of immortality and

eternal life. All this it has done for those who are believers in Christ ; they are consciously reconciled to God through the atonement ; they have passed from death unto life, being made new creatures in Christ Jesus ; and they have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. But there are greater things—a higher and nobler destiny—in reserve for them. The religion which has already produced such a great change in them is intended, in its results, to elevate their entire nature to a state of glory and perfection which it would now be impossible to describe or conceive ; to make them in body as in mind—in personal beauty and glory, as well as in moral purity—to resemble Christ their living Head and elder Brother ; and preparing them for, to put them in possession of, blessedness very far transcending our loftiest imaginings. “ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

We are admonished to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, as the children of God. We ought to live and act in a manner suitable to the character we bear, and the destiny that awaits us. There ought to be nothing low and grovelling—nothing that is mean, and little, and selfish about a Christian man. All his actions and conversation, all his pursuits and dispositions, should be noble, princely, and generous, as is becoming in those who are destined to be numbered amongst the princes of God's spiritual Israel, and made higher than the kings of the earth.

Miss H.—I can imagine that it must be ver

pleasing and encouraging to a Christian minister to feel that he is unfettered in his ministry by those views of Christian doctrine which are opposed to the universal redemption of mankind. Is it not so ?

M.—It certainly is ; and this view of predestination is consistent with the unlimited freeness of the gospel salvation. It must bring unutterable anguish to the mind of a Christian minister, whose heart is imbued with an ardent love of men's souls, when, in offering salvation to a congregation, the creed he has embraced suggests the thought that there are probably some amongst those whom he is addressing that, by God's eternal and unchangeable counsel, are foreappointed to eternal damnation. But no painful misgivings of this sort arise out of that view of predestination which I have shown you is the scriptural one. Without the slightest degree of mental reserve, we can offer salvation to all, assured of the literal, unqualified truth of God's own word, that Christ died for all—tasted death for every man ; and that he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. To all who are yet out of Christ, and out of the family of God, we can hold out the invitation to come and partake the privileges, and share the exalted destiny, of God's children. If they are not found amongst his children, and sharers of their destiny and happiness at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fault will be their own. Jehovah's decree of predestination is to this effect, that all who become saints—who turn to him by true repentance—are justified by faith in Christ, and persevere in evangelical

obedience to the end—shall be finally and eternally glorified.

Now, as I said at the close of our last conversation, it is in the power of every man, through that grace which is withheld from none, to become a party to this covenant, and place himself under this decree of predestination; for it is in the power of every one to accept the invitation of Divine mercy, to come to Christ, be reconciled to God, and receive the adoption of sons. No predestinating decree shuts them out from coming to Christ. No one has been passed by in the scheme of redemption; for the Lord "hath laid upon Christ the iniquities of us all." He does not bestow upon some the influence and grace which are necessary to enable them to embrace salvation, and withhold that grace from others. All the distinctions of which we hear between effectual calling and any other calling, common grace and effectual grace, are but the inventions of man, and altogether without authority from the word of God. He is no respecter of persons; and all those unscriptural distinctions and refinements which would make him so, he repudiates and sweeps away at a stroke, by telling us, in language which no mortal can attempt to limit or qualify without presumption, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

All may come, all *can* come, to him, on his own given invitation, and obtain a saving interest in the covenant of redemption. All things are ready. The Spirit strives with men. Christ the Mediator appears before the throne in their behalf. The

Father waits to be gracious. If they neglect or refuse to come to him, they will perish in their sins, and the blame will be entirely their own. Not one of the whole human family will be able to charge his sin upon God, by attributing it to a decree of predestination adjudging him to death from his mother's womb. To the whole host of reprobates and sinners gathered at the right hand of the Judge, he will say, in language, the truth and sincerity of which none will dare to question,—"I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." "Ye would not come unto me that ye might have life."

THE END.

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